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ABSTRACT

Recommendations for the administration of preschool education in Kenya are suggested in this issue paper by the Director of Basic Education, Ministry of Education, Kenya. After a brief introduction depicting the general development of preschool education in this country and a statement of the objectives of and rationale for preschools, discussion focuses on: (1) administrative issues such as the maintenance of educational standards in preschools, (2) curriculum and support materials, (3) resource centers, and (4) management of preschool institutions. Management topics briefly discussed include cooperation among ministries and the development of a preschool association, establishment of preschool committees, organization of parent/teacher associations, registration of preschools, fee structures in rural and urban areas, and provision of food and free milk to preschool children. Other topics briefly discussed are preservice and inservice training of teachers, terms of service of preschool teachers, supervision of preschools, and linkage between primary and preprimary education. In conclusion, sources of funds for preschool education in Kenya are specified. (RH)

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SOME ISSUES IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

BY

DR. G. P. OLUOCH, DIRECTOR OF BASIC EDUCATION

Introduction

Although institutionalised pre-school education is a new phenomenon in Africa, early childhood education itself is not new in our society. In our traditional societies, children received adequate care, stimulation and socialisation from communities. Intellectual needs were also met through stories, proverbs, riddles, songs and games to mention just a few. Institutionalisation of pre-school education is a by-product of colonialism.

Government participation in pre-school education has been through the Ministry of Housing and Social Services. This Ministry together with other Ministries such as Health, Local Government and Education made great impact in one form or the other in their effort to lay the foundation of pre-school education in this country.

As a result of re-organisation of Ministries following the formation of the first Nyayo Government, pre-school education became a function of the Ministry of Basic Education in accordance with Presidential Circular No. 1 of 1980. The former Ministry of Education started getting seriously interested in pre-school work as early as 1970, when an agreement was made with the Bernard van Leer Foundation of The Hague, Netherlands, to fund a research project in the development of pre-school curriculum. The timing was suitable because the attainment of free primary education was imminent. It was therefore appropriate that the Ministry of Education should begin paying some attention to the problems of pre-schools.

According to statistical data available there are currently nearly 8,000 pre-schools with an enrolment of nearly 400,000 children aged 3-6 years. These are manned by nearly 10,000 teachers. Most of these teachers are unfortunately of low academic qualification and lack training. These pre-schools are sponsored by different organisations and most of them seem to be autonomous. Details of the status of these pre-schools have already been discussed in the opening speech as you will recall.

It is against this background that the Ministry of Basic Education is trying to streamline all aspects of pre-school education in the country. The exercise is a mammoth one and calls for assistance from outside the Ministry.

Objectives and Rationale behind Pre-schools

The nature and purpose of pre-school education are not quite clear in the minds of many people. The confusion centres around issues such as: what should be the objectives of pre-school education?

The following objectives have been stated for pre-school education:

(a) providing a child with an informal education geared towards developing the child's mental capabilities and his physical growth;
(b) helping a child to enjoy living and learning through play;
(c) helping a child to build good habits for effective living as an individual and as a member of the society;
(d) helping a child to appreciate his cultural background and customs;
(e) encouraging spiritual and moral growth of the child;
(f) developing a child's imagination, self-reliance and thinking skills;
(g) enriching the child's experiences to enable him to cope with school life;
(h) to establishing the link between pre-school and primary education.

Administrative Issues:

Terminologies Used

Different terminologies are used for various institutions concerned with the care and education of children before they enter formal schooling. This causes difficulties in communication and also in the nature of the activities that should be carried out in the different institutions. The terminologies used in urban areas include: kindergarten, nurseries, pre-primary. In rural areas these institutions are commonly known as day-care centres or nurseries. It would therefore be useful to adopt a term that would be used by everybody. A proposal made in a workshop at Lusaka in April this year by pre-school trainers that these institutions be known as "Pre-school Centres" could probably be appropriate.

Maintenance of Educational Standards in Pre-Schools

Most nursery schools in Kenya are more or less autonomous relying on their own community's resources and ideas. They rely on the head-teacher's advice and counsel of Parents' Committees. Since most nurseries school teachers are untrained the programmes offered in most nurseries reflect this fact. Most of what the teachers teach is what they recall from their own primary school days. Proper pre-school education is mainly found in the relatively few multi-racial pre-schools in urban areas which are supported by well-to-do families where the few teachers with professional training in early childhood education are found.

Now that the responsibility of organising pre-school education programme has been vested in the Ministry of Basic Education, the Minister is empowered by the Education Act to maintain certain standards in schools. As you are all aware the Education Act is under review and the regulations governing pre-schools will be incorporated in the revised Education Act. Like all other schools, pre-schools will be expected to meet certain requirements.

These will include:

(a) Physical facilities—the premises to comply with health regulations including provision of latrines;

(b) Class size—teacher/pupil ratio for pre-schools should be one teacher for 20 to 25 pupils. In rural areas possibly one teacher with an attendant could look after 50 children

(c) Staff—to maintain the required standard in pre-schools, sponsors should employ trained teachers

Curriculum:

(a) *Curriculum and Support Materials*

The Ministry of Basic Education is preparing a curriculum for the training of pre-school teachers and teaching guidelines for children aged 3-6 years. The pre-school syllabus is nearing completion and will be made available to pre-schools for use. Sponsors of different pre-schools will be expected to advise the head-teachers to use the curriculum and guidelines.

(b) *Support Materials*

The development of any curriculum goes hand in hand with support materials. Whereas the production of the required 8,000 copies or so of pre-school curriculum guide might not dig deep into the budget of the Ministry of Basic Education, the support materials will definitely cost a substantial amount of money, which with the current economic problems might prove difficult to obtain.

However, since most of the nursery schools are built and managed by parents' committees and although people's attitudes to supporting this level of education is positive, care should be taken to minimise the cost of production of these support materials, so that the price is not prohibitive to nursery schools especially those in the rural areas.

Resource Centres:

A possible solution would be to establish an Early Learning Resource Unit in the country.

The resource unit could be charged with the responsibility of collecting and or publishing materials which are relevant to pre-school requirements and will meet the needs of pre-school children, teachers and the community. There is need therefore to carry out a research to determine what exists and what can be done to improve the situation; and to train the personnel to man the resource unit.

Management of Pre-School Institutions:

Co-operation among Ministries

There are various Ministries and agencies involved in the welfare of the pre-school child. The fundamental question that should be the concern of everybody is whether, the Ministry of Basic Education which is now

charged with the responsibility of looking after pre-primary education, should be left to look after all aspects related to the education of a pre-school child.

It appears to me that there is need for more intimate cooperation between the Ministry of Basic Education and the other relevant Ministries, as well as with parents, the community and other relevant agencies. The question is how can the contribution of all these bodies be harmonised to serve the intended purpose. One way of facilitating co-operation is to set up a permanent Inter-Ministerial Committee under the auspices of the Ministry of Basic Education.

Some of the involvemnet of the other Ministries could be as follows:-

Ministry of Local Government:-	employing some pre-school teachers employing supervisors supplying materials to pre-schools sponsored by councils.
Ministry of Health:	providing medical services, extended to cover all the rural pre-schools
Ministry of Culture and Social Services:	encouraging parents to put up pre-schools according to specification set by the Ministry of Basic Education.

Pre-School Association

Other agencies involved in pre-school work include:-

Religious organizations, Voluntary organisations such as Maendeleo ya Wanawake, Lions Clubs, Red Cross, Private individuals and organizations,

Parastatal bodies like Kenya Railways, Ports Authority and Post and Telecommunications. These provide a welfare service to their employees. Coordination of activities of all these groups and dissemination of information to and from different sponsors become very cumbersome due the fact that they all are autonomous and have nobody under which they operate.

There is need for the formation of a Pre-School Association that would serve as medium for transmission and dissemination of information. Its objectives would be to promote pre-school education in the country. It would also look into the interests of children as well as the teachers. The Central Association would have representatives from district associations.

Pre-School Committees

Pre-primary units attached to primary schools are managed by primary school committees. A pre-school and a primary school adjacent to one another and serving the same community can operate under the same primary school committee. Pre-schools far from primary schools will need to establish their own school committee for day to day running.

Parent-Teachers' Association

For the benefit of overall development of the child, it is important that there should be cooperation between parents and teachers. The school should involve parents in its activities and afford them the chance to understand these activities properly. The community around the school should also be involved in pre-school work. A Parent Teachers' Association should be formed for each pre-school and should be made functional. Again, in pre-primary units attached to primary schools one Parent Teachers' Association could suffice for both primary and pre-school classes.

Registration

The Ministry of Basic Education is responsible for the registration of all pre-school. The Ministry should therefore lay down conditions of registration.

Fees Structure

As indicated earlier on, most of pre-schools in the rural areas are built on Harambee basis and are managed by parents' committees. The quality of facilities provided in these schools is determined by the amount of fees raised. Due to economic situation of the rural population, the fees charged in these schools are low and hence the low standard of the schools. Some county councils have established pre-schools of reasonable standard. The fees charged by these local authorities are also reasonable.

In the urban areas, however there is an element of private enterprise in the provision of pre-schools. Individuals or groups of individuals have set up their own pre-schools with attractive facilities. The fees charged for the services offered are normally too high for the average and low income parents.

The Ministry of Basic Education is looking into possibility of controlling the fees charged in all pre-schools. One way being considered is the fixing of fees through the registration procedure.

Milk and Feeding Scheme

Opinion has been expressed on many occasions of the need to extend free milk programme to pre-school children. It is the desire of the Ministry that even if there is no additional milk available, whatever there is should be shared between pre-school and primary children. At the moment only 175 pre-school age children are getting free milk under special arrangements. These are from children's homes as follows:

Isiolo Children's Home	35 children
Nyango Children's Home	35 children
Arap Moi Children's Home	35 children
Kisii Children's Home	35 children
Kadui (Bungoma) Children's Home	35 children
Total	175

Also about 20,000 pre-school children in 13 arid and semi-arid districts are benefitting from the school feeding programme.

The decision however to include all pre-school children in the school milk and feeding programme lies outside the Ministry of Basic Education but we hope that these children will be included in the programme soon. In the meantime, all pre-school institutions should endeavour to give children something to drink or eat, for example milk, porridge, or maize and beans.

Training of Teachers

Pre-Service Course

There is one year training programme which is organised by the Government. Candidates who are recruited for the Pre-primary course are required to meet the following conditions:-

(i) Be practising pre-school teachers

(ii) Possess-one of the following
   (a) Certificate of Education with a minimum of 4 passes,
   (b) Kenya Junior Certificate of Education,
   (c) C.P.E. with a minimum of 15 points especially where candidates with better academic qualifications are not available.

The training of pre-school teachers is conducted in centres some of which are multipurpose in nature. These centres are:-

Name of Institution	*Area Catered for*	*Enrolment*
Matuga District Development Centre	North, Eastern and Coast Provinces	30
Embu District Development Centre	Eastern & Central Provinces	40
Kilimambogo Teachers College	Central & Nairobi Provinces	40
Njoro—Kenyatta Education Institute	Rift Valley, part of Central Province	40
Rosterman-Kakamega	Western & part of Rift Valley Province	40
Kisii Community Development Centre	Nyanza & part of Rift Valley Province	40
	Total Enrolment	230

Out of the nearly 10,000 pre-school teachers in the country only 900 have undergone the one year training programme. A few others have received some kind of training organised by non-government bodies.

It is therefore self evident that the facilities provided so far would not be able to adequately cater for the needs of this country. The Ministry of Basic Education is seriously looking into possibility of establishing a large training unit that will help to increase the output.

Inservice Courses

It is intended that the one year pre-service course should be supplemented with 6 months in-service courses. These will be organised by the Inspectorate and the first group will commence in August this year. For the purpose of this in-service training, the country is divided into three zones: Eastern, Central and Western. Local authorities interested in inservicing their own pre-school teachers are also encouraged to do so. It is suggested that they consult with the Ministry of Basic Education in planning and executing these courses.

Other Staff Development Programmes

There is need to develop personnel to handle different areas of pre-schools. These personnel include:-

Trainers
Inspectors Supervisors
Early Learning Resource Unit Staff
Administrators.

Short Term Plans:-

So far 2 induction courses related to pre-school work have been organized as follows:-

— an induction course for some field officers
— an induction course for trainers.

A second induction course for trainers will be held in August this year. It is expected that with funds provided by UNICEF several short courses will be organised between now and end of 1984.

Long Term Plans:-

Through the Staff Development Section, in liaison with the Planning Section and Directorate of Personnel Management, concrete long-term plans will be made for staff development for the four types of personnel mentioned above.

Terms of Service of Pre-school Teachers:

Although the Ministry of Basic Education is currently not the employer of pre-school teachers, guidelines should be provided to the sponsors regarding the renumeration of pre-school teachers especially trained ones. This would be determined by qualifications. Inter-ministerial meetings referred to earlier and the formation of pre-school association could go a long way in facilitating the necessary cooperation required to solve the problem of pre-school teachers, such as salaries.

Supervision of Pre-Schools:

The supervision of pre-schools is at the moment being carried out by two categories of officers. The first category consists of the Assistant Education Officers who report to District Education Officers. The second category consists of Nursery School Supervisors employed by Local Authorities. These compile reports which go to the Clerks to Councils and copies are sent to District Development Officers and District Basic Education Officers. In some areas, the supervision is being done harmoniously by the two groups teaming up. There is however need to streamline and coordinate further the activities of the two supervisors at provincial level.

Link between Primary and Pre-Primary Education:

One of the aims of pre-school education as we noted earlier, is to prepare a child for primary school education. The Ministry of Basic Education encourages the establishment of pre-primary units for children aged 5 years. The units should be attached to primary schools. The idea is to have these units supported by the respective local communities. With the introduction of an appropriate pre-school curriculum it is expected that pre-schools will play their rightful role and not indulge in primary school work. However, primary schools will be guided as to what to expect from a child who has attended a pre-school.

Sources of Funding:

Funds for pre-school education have come or come from different sources. These sources are indicated below:-

Ministry of Basic Education

The Ministry of Basic Education provides funds for the following:

(i) Pre-School Teacher Training Centres by way of grants;
(ii) Maintenance of vehicles donated by UNICEF;
(iii) Pre-school curriculum development;
(iv) Salaries for personnel dealing with pre-school work at various levels i.e. Field Officers and Headquarters staff and Kenya Institute of Education and Inspectorate personnel.

The total amount allocated for 1981 1982 was K£ 78,400.

United Nations Children Fund

The United Nation's Children Fund has provided funds for:

(i) Reimbursement of accommodation expenses incurred in pre-service and in-service courses.
(ii) Provision of learning and teaching aids for the two courses.
(iii) Donations of vehicles to support the pre-service and in-service courses.

The total amount allocated to pre-school activities for the triennium period 1982 1984 is US Dollars 639.600. This includes:

£ US 61.800 originally allocated to the Ministry of Local Government for the development of resources centres.

£ US 23.000 allocated to the Ministry of Social Services for research on special needs of children in urban settlement, nomadic areas and in plantations.

Bernard van Leer Foundation

This body has sponsored the Ministry of Education Pre-School Education Project based at the Kenya Institute of Education. The Project was launched in 1971. The Foundation has sponsored this Seminar as well.

I wish to emphasize what the Minister said during his opening speech that our Ministry appreciates greatly the support given by the Foundation. I would also like to appeal to the Foundation not to close its doors as yet because there are other areas in which we still need its assistance. These areas should become clear as the seminar progresses.

Local Authorities

Some Local Authorities provide funds for the following activities:-

(i) Putting up pre-schools in their districts and furnishing them.

(ii) Paying pre-school teachers in council maintained pre-schools.

(iii) Employing nursery school supervisors.

(iv) Maintaining pre-school buildings.

Miscellaneous Sponsors

Several sponsors have provided funds to:-

(i) Put up pre-schools

(ii) Employ the teachers who man their pre-schools.

(iii) Provide some learning and teaching materials.

Conclusion:

What is contained in this paper should be regarded as only some of the highlights of the many issues still surrounding the provision of Pre-school education in Kenya. I am sure more will come to light during this seminar. I hope that the seminar will come up with suggestions as to how some or all of them could be solved.